

I. Executive Summary

The East Providence Health Equity Zone (EPHEZ) is deeply committed to maintaining an approach to community health and wellness that is rooted in collective impact, best practices, equity, and a collaborative governance model that integrates persons with lived experience in identifying barriers, creating solutions, and delivering services. Much of the first three years of EPHEZ's existence were defined by our response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as we built relationships with residents while distributing essential supplies, masks, sanitizer, resource packets, and testing information; and connected with local organizations by assisting with program and event promotion, connected residents with their services, and relayed questions and concerns on their behalf to the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH). In addition to building relationships with residents and external partners, we also spent our early years strengthening our internal relationships; our Steering Committee focused on solidifying our formal governance structure, while EPHEZ staff assisted in the development of internal policies and procedures. As EPHEZ entered Year 4 in July 2022, our development focus was two-fold: first, a continued emphasis on professional development for our workforce; and second, expanding our Collaborative membership, focusing on organizations and partnerships that directly related to needs identified by residents during our 2022 Community Needs Assessment.

EPHEZ remains fortunate to have a large, diverse group of residents and professionals serving as the Steering Committee; beyond retaining original members such as the East Providence Senior Center, the East Providence Area Chamber of Commerce, the Rhode Island Parent Information Network (RIPIN), Jules Hope Chest, and the Community Development Office of the City of East Providence, EPHEZ has also been able to expand the Steering Committee to include the University of Rhode Island's SNAP Education program, Horizon Healthcare Partners (HHP), and the East Providence School Department (EPSD). The EPHEZ Collaborative has expanded as well, to now include over 45 new members, including representatives from the Green and Healthy Homes Initiative, United Health Care, Open Farms Retreat, Movement Education Outdoors, and the Weight Management and Diabetes Control Clinic at Miriam Hospital and Brown University, among many others. EPHEZ's approach to collaboration remains grounded in a recognition of the expertise of our partners and a commitment to uplifting and supporting existing programming. This approach, combined with our ability to provide staff support, community connections, and thoughtful feedback continues to provide a steady increase in interest in the EPHEZ from residents and organizations alike. Throughout Year 4, EPHEZ was also able to provide additional support to the community, by providing direct funding of over \$6,000 to local organizations, an additional \$5,000 of programmatic supplies, and grant writing support that has resulted in \$145,000 in approved grant applications as of June 2023.

As we entered Year 4, an ongoing focus of the EPHEZ Steering Committee and all workgroups has been a review of the workgroup structure and schedule, as we work to ensure that all workgroups are equitable, accessible, and impactful for residents. Three workgroups were added over the course of the year: Food Access, Early Childhood, and Environmental Justice; in an effort to ensure that we are not overburdening members, other workgroups chose to adjust their meeting schedule to either bi-monthly, quarterly, or on an as needed basis. To support the increase in programming, as well as provide additional community support, two full-time positions were added this year: a Community Health Worker focusing on food insecurity and nutrition education, and a School-Based Family Navigator. It should also be noted that there was an increased diversity in funding sources for personnel this year; our backbone organization, East Bay Community Action Program (EBCAP) once again demonstrated their commitment to the HEZ initiative by utilizing funding obtained by EBCAP's Behavioral Health department to fund our School-Based Family Navigator, and the East Providence School Department (EPSD) also demonstrated their recognition and support of the work of EPHEZ by supporting our Family Navigator role for eight hours/week during the academic year. The East Providence, Bristol, and Warren HEZs also continued to partner to ensure the efficient use of resources, sharing two administrative support positions in the Finance and Communications departments.

As in previous years, EPHEZ also continued to lean on the resources provided by EBCAP and the natural strengths created by having a backbone organization with such a deep array of programming and services. Through the work of the Rhode to Equity team, a community/clinical linkage also supported by the Community Health Worker (CHW) Component C grant, we continued to deepen our partnership with the EBCAP Food Pantry, providing CHW support two days/week at the Bullocks Point Food Pantry, and introducing our monthly Produce Week, a time when all Food Pantry clients have access to an expanded selection of fresh and frozen produce, lean proteins, and whole grains. This week has proven exceptionally popular since its introduction in January, serving an average of 40-50 households each week, and with residents regularly calling to find out that month's produce offerings and providing suggestions for future purchases. We were also able to establish a relationship with Hope's Harvest and the Food Pantry, allowing for fresh produce donations. Our collaboration with the EBCAP Community Health Team (CHT) has also continued, as we utilized CHW Component C funding to support a full-time CHW attached to the CHT's East Providence location. We have also expanded our monthly meetings with the CHT to include the Bristol and Warren HEZ teams; in an example of our commitment to providing internal professional development opportunities for CHWs, these meetings are facilitated by a rotating panel of CHWs across all teams, and serves as an opportunity to discuss community needs, share new resources, and plan programming. Looking to early childhood, our Family Navigators continue to partner with Head Start and Early Head Start, supporting the placement of hydroponic gardens in the East Providence Head Start classrooms; offering caregiver-and-child cooking demonstrations on-site in partnership with the University of Rhode Island (URI) SNAP-Education program; and participating in quarterly Head Start Advisory Council (HSAC) meetings. We also continue to collaborate with EBCAP's evidence-based Family Visiting programs, both in our ongoing "Family Music Time with the Phil" weekly music and parent education series with the Rhode Island Philharmonic Orchestra and Music School, and in our popular Play-and-Learn series.

The relationship between the EPHEZ, the EBCAP Family Visiting program, and the East Providence School Department is particularly noteworthy this year. As we move towards creating full-service community schools in East Providence, the presence of EPHEZ Family Navigators within EPSD schools, the above-mentioned Play-and-Learns, and ongoing programming around outdoors education and school/community gardens has received significant attention this year, at both a national and local level. The national Campaign for Grade Level Reading (CGLR) invited both EPHEZ and EPSD to participate in a panel with other recognized leaders throughout the nation as an example of a best practice relationship between school departments and community organizations; the Education Development Center (EDC), a national- and internationally-recognized organization working to improve education, promote health, and expand economic opportunity globally is currently working on a case-study highlighting the relationship between EPHEZ, EBCAP, and the EPSD; and at a local level, in 2023 the EPHEZ, Family Visiting, and the EPSD received a Community Action Outstanding Service Award from the Rhode Island Community Action Association. Looking to Year 5, we are excited to carry this momentum forward into expanded programming and opportunities for systems change, as well as an increased focus on securing sustained funding.

The East Providence HEZ remains proud of the continued success of our programming initiatives, particularly as they begin to set the foundation for sustainable, impactful systems change. The highlighted activities below are snapshots of our work throughout the year, and are a response to the needs identified by residents during our 2019 and 2022 Community Needs Assessments, as well as those identified by EPHEZ staff and Collaborative members over the course of the year. They address the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) identified by the Rhode Island Department of Health, and highlight EPHEZ's position in the community as a trusted resource and connection between organizations and the communities that they serve:

- **COVID-19 Emergency Response Services:** The EPHEZ CHWs were able to continue distributing masks, sanitizer, wipes, and resource packets to residents throughout the year. Following the provision of at-home test kits from RIDOH, EPHEZ distributed 3,409 kits to residents and community organizations. We continued to partner with several organizations throughout the year to provide targeted outreach, including

Good Neighbors RI, Weaver Library, and the City of East Providence. We also continued to expand our outreach efforts, beginning a new partnership this year with the East Providence Laundromax by providing on-site outreach on weeknights and weekends, we were able to assist busy residents, particularly parents and caregivers, in applying for services, including SNAP, LIHEAP, and Head Start enrollment. We have also begun inviting other organizations to join us during our street outreach efforts, including the Green and Healthy Homes Initiative (lead remediation) and United Healthcare; this inclusive effort will continue in Year 5, as we continue to bridge the gap between organizations and individuals. We reached over 10,000 individuals through our COVID-19 response efforts over the last year, and they received a mixture of resource referral/connection, virus testing and vaccination support, education, masks and other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and SDOH and basic needs assistance. Outreach staff continued to complete the Community Health Worker training offered by the Community Health Worker Association of Rhode Island (CHWARI) in conjunction with RIDOH, with three staff receiving their certifications during the first half of 2023, and a fourth staff member completing their CHW Supervisor training during the second half of 2022. The EPHEZ team also continued their strong relationship with the East Providence Fire Department, sharing resources, providing referrals, and partnering for outreach events.

- **Rhode to Equity (R2E):** EPHEZ continued to serve as the team lead for the second and final year of the Rhode to Equity initiative; this programmatic and systems change work will continue next year, during the final year of the Component C CHW grant. This initiative has promoted the integration of clinical and population health, centering people with lived experience to address health equity barriers and food insecurity for residents experiencing food insecurity and chronic illness, with a particular emphasis on diabetes. As mentioned above, one of the highlights of this programming was embedding a produce-based approach within the EBCAP Food Pantry at Bullocks Point, via the creation of our monthly Produce Week. This programming has also focused on increasing nutrition education for children, and emphasizing the benefits of eating fresh, local produce at an early age. This focus has been embraced by the EPSD and East Providence parents alike, leading to the placement of over 60 hydroponic gardens in classrooms and libraries throughout East Providence; a school garden at Agnes B. Hennessey Elementary School and secured funding to create school gardens at Orlo Avenue and Silver Spring Elementary Schools and Oldham Pre-K during the 2023-2024 academic year; and the beginnings of a community garden at the Fuller Creative Learning Center. The work of the Rhode to Equity team has also garnered interest from statewide partners; EPHEZ was invited to participate in the Food and Environmental Justice Activator Cohort led by American Forests and the RI Food Policy Council; the ongoing Produce-ing Potential evaluation pilot that is also led by the RI Food Policy Council; and an invitation to present at the 2023 CTC-RI Annual Conference, which will focus on community and clinical linkages. Finally, as mentioned above, our R2E CHW has been appointed to the Relish Rhodney 2.0 advisory board, serving as a community voice as the next five-year food systems plan for Rhode Island is developed.
- **Pre-School Development:** EPHEZ has continued to connect families with young children and expectant parents to an array of integrated early childhood and parenting supports. Our Family Navigators continued to expand and update a resource database that is utilized internally and was shared with EPHEZ Collaborative members, Early Childhood Workgroup members, staff from the EP School Department, and the East Providence Mayor's Office. This resource has been well-received by providers, municipal leaders, and residents alike, who view this as another example of EPHEZ working to provide community members with the resources they have requested. We continued to partner with the Rhode Island Philharmonic Orchestra and Music School and the EBCAP Family Visiting program, offering "Family Music Time with the Phil," which ran for 33 weeks and combined music education for toddlers, infants, and pre-k children with the Parents as Teachers evidence-based curriculum for parents. Through a growing relationship with the First 10/ Community Schools Initiative, the EP Public Libraries, and

the EP School Department, we collaborated on offering three evidence-based Play & Learns for infants and toddlers that were well attended and received by families; throughout the three sessions, 31 families participated and received evidence-based training from either Parents as Teachers, Growing Great Kids, or The Basics.

- **Partnership with the East Providence School Department:** The East Providence School Department continued participation in the “First Ten/Community Schools” initiative, which is grounded in the understanding of schools as community hubs. This year, the School Department, recognizing the impact of our First 10 partnership at Agnes B. Hennessey Elementary, invested in expanding these resources to families within other schools. In addition to one Family Navigator continuing to support Hennessey Elementary School, a School-Based Family Navigator joined in November 2022 and has since supported the Emma G. Whiteknact Elementary School, Martin and Oldham Pre-K, and Martin Middle School. These additional schools were identified based on level of need. At each school, a Family Navigator is on-site one day each week to meet with families and make appropriate referrals to services and resources. They have connected families with WIC, SNAP, LIHEAP, VOCA, and more. The School-Based Family Navigator is also embedded within the EBCAP Behavioral Health Department, and has utilized this connection to provide direct connections to families. Recognizing that not all families are being reached, our Navigators have also partnered with Weaver Library, and will offer drop-in office hours one day/week for all families, beginning in July 2023.
- **EPHEZ Environmental Justice:** As part of our continued focus on cross-grant programming and braiding funding, the Rhode to Equity team and our Family Navigators partnered to support the placement of hydroponic gardening systems inside school classrooms. In addition to Hennessey, EPHEZ has supplied the following schools with hydroponics: Orlo Avenue, Silver Spring, and Whiteknact Elementary schools; Martin Pre-K; and the two EBCAP Head Start locations in East Providence, located on Willett and Turner Avenue. These hydroponic systems allow students to grow fresh produce in the classroom, learn about related educational topics, and take home the seedlings to share with their families. In order to support the integration of these hydroponics in the classrooms, the Family Navigator created and shared resources with teachers and school faculty including tips for growing and maintenance, how to engage students in the growing process, and lesson plans to connect the garden to the classroom. After the positive response to this initiative, EPHEZ sought out additional funding to support ongoing Environmental Justice work. Earlier this year, EPHEZ applied for and received an Environmental Justice Grant through RIDOH. The primary feature of this grant is the formation of an Environmental Justice workgroup made up of community partners and residents to increase education and discussion around the environmental impacts on health equity in East Providence. This workgroup will be invited to presentations and workshops on different topics given by community organizations as well as participate in brainstorming a shared project goal for our time together.
- **EPHEZ Infrastructure and Professional Development:** The initial 2019 Community Needs Assessment showed that East Providence has many strengths, including a strong, existing sense of community, a robust emergency services system, and geographical proximity to many resource rich locations. After the emphasis in Year 3 on empowering workgroup members to identify areas of need, potential partnerships, and programming opportunities, Year 4 focused upon developing programming and partnerships to build upon these strengths. Throughout the year, all workgroups were asked to participate in an exercise where they identified why they joined the workgroup, what they hoped to gain from their membership, and 1-3 goals that they would like to accomplish throughout the grant year. This exercise created the framework for workgroup activities for Year 4, including opportunities for members to take the lead in developing and implementing their ideas. For example, our Food Access workgroup came together to develop a Fact Sheet linking residents to food-related resources in the area; the East Providence Prevention Coalition, members of our BH workgroup, took the lead in creating our “Community Connections” monthly programming; and

our Resident Engagement workgroup is planning a networking event for social service organizations in the area for SFY24. Internal professional development was also emphasized this year, including ongoing support for staff to become trained as CHWs. Over the last year, three additional EPHEZ staff were trained as CHWs; as of this grant year, we now have five full-time and one part-time staff who have received their certifications. EPHEZ staff have also taken advantage of additional trainings offered by RIDOH and CHWARI, including certifications in the CHW Supervisor training and Chronic Pain Self-Management. Staff and Collaborative members participated in Project Firstline trainings; Results-Based Accountability (RBA) anti-racist training; an Introduction to Transgender Health and Allyship; and an informational session on Medicaid Redetermination. In partnership with the Bristol and Warren HEZs, and with the support of EBCAP, we were also able to provide all-HEZ staff training on Psychological Safety and Narcan Administration. Finally, as we continue to create the foundation for sustained programming, funding, and evaluation, staff received training in evaluation, grant writing, and collaborative/collective impact.

II. Demographic Information of HEZ Community Served

HEZ Demographic Description	
Geographic area served	The East Providence HEZ serves the entire city: Central East Providence, Rumford, and Riverside. (See census tracts area map on attachment titled “EP HEZ Resident Needs Assessment”). At the time of the attached assessment, East Providence (EP), the fifth largest city in RI, had the following demographics: a population of 47,618 persons; socioeconomically, a median income lower than the state median and approximately 11% of residents living in extreme poverty (100% or below FPL); 31% in poverty (138% or below) and 60% under 400% of the federal poverty guidelines. The service area population is predominantly white (non-Hispanic) with growing racially and ethnically diverse populations emerging: Black, Hispanic Latinx, Asian, and individuals who identify as two-or more ethnicities. According to the most recent UDS Mapper data (a national database administered by Health Resources Services Administration), between the years of 2012-2016, approximately 13,317 persons with low income resided in the city. Data supported the following identified health concerns: over 8% had been told they had diabetes; approximately 30% had been told they had high blood pressure; over 12% adults who have delayed/not sought care due to cost; and nearly 11% had no regular source of care.
Description of racial/ethnic groups	The EP HEZ service area is comprised of the following racial and ethnic groups and the EP HEZ seeks to serve each of these groups with an equity and inclusion lens:

<p>served in area and estimated population reached</p>	<p>82.6% White 6.4% Black 6.2% Hispanic 5.2% Two or More Races 5% Other 2.9% Asian</p> <p>The estimated population reached during the last year through various COVID-19 support efforts including education, mask distribution, vaccine delivery and support, and testing delivery and support was approximately 10,424. The number supported with direct services through the pandemic via COVID-19 outreach to address a broad range of needs (food, housing, SDOH supports, etc.), as well as through Rhode to Equity, Safe Sleep, Parents as Teachers, Play-and-Learns, and additional programming was over 700 additional individuals. Our social media reach also increased, as we reached an estimated 146,145 individuals via digital communication, including social media and email.</p>
<p>Key areas of RI Statewide SDOH</p>	<p>The Community Needs Assessment (see attached EP HEZ Community Needs Assessment), along with RIDOH identified SDOH needs have determined the focus of the Steering Committee and Work Groups to date. This is a dynamic process as the EP HEZ is committed to a true collective impact approach that continuously incorporates a focus on equity and the voices of those with lived experience. The Steering Committee is strong, and the currently active Work Groups include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident Engagement • Communications • Behavioral Health • Food Access • Early Childhood • Environmental Justice • Senior Services • Housing and Homelessness • Governance (ad hoc)

When addressing RI Health Equity Measures, much of our work is accomplished through our partnerships within the community, and working together to create short- and long-term impacts, whether from limited time programming, such as the PAT/RI Philharmonic School music class, or behind the scenes changes, such as the implementation of Cantril's Ladder by the CHT and Food Pantry during initial assessments. Internally, we also recognize the work we can do to address these measures; for example, staff participation in the EBCAP Justice and Equity Taskforce, which provided training on bystander intervention and psychological safety. Even for the areas that are not a specific focus for EP HEZ at the moment, we try to stay involved and informed, and prepared to move forward with partnerships and services should that focus change-an example is general community trauma, and our participation in the Ocean State Trauma Informed Care Coalition (OSTICC).

Specific Statewide SDOH and RIDOH Health Equity Measures addressed this year include:

- Healthcare Access:
 - Partnership with RIDOH Dental Program, EBCAP Dental Clinic, Managed Care Organizations, and Integrated Healthcare Partners (IHP)
 - Collaboration with the East Providence Housing Authority to present monthly workshops on topics designed to improve the health literacy of residents
 - Utilizing the strength of having EBCAP as a backbone-connection to EBCAP Health has allowed for increased outreach and connection to the community around COVID-19 testing and vaccination
- Social Services:
 - EP HEZ outreach staff trained in completing SNAP applications; staff trained in providing referrals to WIC, LIHEAP, LIWAP, and Weatherization
 - Community Health Worker stationed in the EP Food Pantry 2x/week, and trained on completing Food Pantry needs assessment(s)
- Behavioral Health:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Collaborate with East Providence Prevention Coalition (EPPC), East Bay Recovery Center, EBCAP Behavioral Health, Bradley Hospital, and Family Care Community Partnership (FCCP)○ BH Workgroup focused on educational programming○ Senior Workgroup-focus on peer support, addressing and preventing substance use among seniors● Social Vulnerability:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Conscious of social vulnerability in program intake/assessments○ Implementation of Cantril's Ladder by EPHEZ, Food Pantry and Community Health Team (CHT)○ Staff Development: Trainings included Safety Care, Motivational Interviewing, Mental Health First Aid, Trauma Informed Care, and Conflict Resolution/Mediation○ Partnership with the EBCAP Transgender Whole Healthcare (TWH) department to offer an LGBTQIA+ focused housing workshop○ Support of an LGBTQIA+ lending library, in partnership with the EBCAP TWH department and the Bristol and Warren HEZs● Equity in Policy:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Housing and Homelessness workgroup is heavily focused on impacting policy; subcommittees for education, identifying development opportunities, and identifying regulations that should be changed○ Participation in RI Hunger Elimination Taskforce; RI Food Policy Council; EPHEZ representative appointed to Relish Rhodey 2.0○ Encouraging self and community advocacy: Co-hosted 8-week Housing and Advocacy workshop for East Providence residents in partnership with Housing Works RI and the East Providence Community Development Office● Food Insecurity:
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rhode to Equity (R2E) Grant: provided fresh produce 1x/month to 29 East Providence residents with diabetes experiencing food insecurity; transitioned in January to 1 week/month of increased fresh/frozen produce, lean proteins, and whole grains at EBCAP's Bullocks Point Food Pantry, serving an average of 100 individuals/week ○ Volunteer RDN provides education-information and recipes each month, virtual cooking demo in September ○ Education-partnering with local pantries to create information sheets and flyers ○ Sustainability: Actively seeking outside funding, including the submission of a Food Insecurity Grant application to the RI Foundation in late Spring 2023, in collaboration with Bristol and Warren HEZs and the EBCAP Food Pantry at Bullocks Point
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III. Major Accomplishments

Health Disparities

As it has since the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020, an integral component of EPHEZ's COVID-19 outreach efforts is the continued building of community relationships and trust, built in a manner that allows us to meet residents where they are, both physically and emotionally. The EPHEZ team is well-known in the community, and we continue to receive regular requests from local organizations to provide resource tables at events or to co-host local programming. We once again coordinate a variety of direct services over the last year, including:

- 5,797 people received masks;
- 3,409 received at-home test kits;
- 4,323 individuals received direct support services from EPHEZ Community Health Workers;
- 327 SDOH screenings provided

We were also able to partner with the Rhode Island Minority Elder Taskforce and the Cape Verdean Progressive Center this year to offer a direct application assistance day. This event was a huge success, with over 100 residents assisted in completing applications for a variety of services, including SNAP, LIHEAP, LIWAP, WIC, Weatherization, Head Start and Early Head Start, Medicaid, and subsidized housing. Due to our excellent relationships with other organizations in the area, we were also able to invite our partners to join us, including local Managed Care Organizations (MCOs), the RI

Parent Information Network, a variety of EBCAP departments, the East Providence Boys and Girls Club, and many others. Residents provided overwhelmingly positive feedback about this event, appreciating the ability to directly connect with organizations and receive assistance with complicated application forms, and asking if we would host a similar event at other locations throughout East Providence in the future.

Rhode to Equity

The East Providence Rhode to Equity team, led by EPHEZ, successfully participated in the second and final year of Rhode to Equity (R2E), an innovative approach to creating systems change that is funded by the Rhode Island Health Systems Transformation Fund. Rhode to Equity combines the resources of HEZs, community partners, Accountable Entities (AEs), and Persons with Lived Experience (PLE) to address barriers to health equity in individual communities. The East Providence team, which includes members of EBCAP's Community Health Team, Nurse Care Managers, and the EBCAP Food Pantry, as well as staff from Integrated Healthcare Partners (IHP) and a resident with lived experience, focused on addressing food insecurity and improving nutrition literacy among East Providence residents, with an emphasis on residents with diabetes. Following the completion of the Produce to People pilot program in December 2022, in January 2023 the EBCAP Food Pantry at Bullocks Point began providing increased amounts and varieties of fresh/frozen produce, lean proteins, and whole grains to all clients, as well as recipes and nutrition education. Over the last six months, participation in this program has seen a 360% increase. Residents have shared how much they have enjoyed the program, as well as the opportunity to provide feedback on the items available. A new partnership was created in Spring 2023 between EPHEZ, the EBCAP Food Pantry, and Hope's Harvest, allowing for the donation and distribution of fresh produce. Following the first donation in June 2023, we were able to distribute even more fresh produce to clients, including kale, arugula, squash, bok choy, lettuce, and snap peas.

Year 4 also marked the first full grant year of the Community Health Worker Component C Grant (CHW Grant), which EPHEZ originally received in December 2021. We were able to hire two full-time employees under this grant; one to support EPHEZ, and the one to support the Community Health Team. Both employees received their CHW certifications this year, and have become regular attendees of local and state advocacy committees, including in the areas of transportation, food access, and nutrition. EPHEZ was also able to integrate our CHW into the EBCAP Food Pantry, providing staffing support two days/week. This increased support has allowed the Food Pantry to provide on-site service navigation to clients, increasing access to programs such as SNAP, LIHEAP, and WIC.

Improving Health Literacy

A common theme across the 2019 and 2022 Community Needs Assessment was the need for improved health literacy among residents. Over the course of the past year, EPHEZ has focused on both providing community education aimed at improving health literacy, and identifying community partners and subject matter experts to assist in this goal. Led by our Rhode to Equity Coordinator, our community health education initiatives this year included:

- Six-week "Chronic Pain Self-Management" course, offered in partnership with the East Providence Senior Center and the East Bay Recovery Center;
- Monthly workshop series in partnership with the East Providence Housing Authority: beginning in March 2023, EPHEZ and the EP Housing Authority began offering on-site monthly workshops to improve health literacy; areas of focus have included behavioral health, Medicaid redetermination, and oral hygiene. In June 2023, in lieu of a workshop we offered health fairs at two locations, which included an exercise demonstration. A variety of organizations hosted tables at each fair, and 25-50 residents attended each event;

- Eight-week “Housing and Advocacy” workshop, hosted in collaboration with Housing Works RI and the East Providence Office of Community Development; as mentioned earlier, this series was a deep dive into the housing regulations and upcoming developments in East Providence, and offered attendees a chance to meet with several East Providence City Council members as they learned how to utilize their knowledge and lived experience to advocate with elected officials. Residents were engaged and provided positive feedback, and two members have since joined the EPHEZ Collaborative as workgroup members;
- LGBTQ+ Intro to Housing Workshop: Co-hosted with the EBCAP Transgender Whole Healthcare program and facilitated by a local realtor and broker who are members of the LGBTQ+ community, this workshop focused on the beginnings of the home buying process through an LGBTQ+ lens, including providing information on addressing discrimination.

Partnership with the City of East Providence

Throughout Year 4, we continued to develop our strong relationship with the City of East Providence. We regularly host an outreach table at City Hall, connecting with residents and city personnel alike. EPHEZ and the East Providence Mayor’s Office co-hosted a special session of our Housing Workgroup, offering residents a chance to hear from the Mayor directly about housing developments in East Providence, as well as to ask questions and provide feedback on housing services and supports needed in the city. Mayor DaSilva also invited EPHEZ to join him during several of his “Coffee with the Mayor” sessions at assisted living facilities throughout the city, again highlighting the value the municipality places on the EPHEZ. The East Providence Prevention Coalition also continues to be a strong partner, as our “Coffee and Connections” series from last year has transitioned to a monthly “Community Connections” series, providing interactive programming designed to facilitate resident connection and peer support. Recognizing the importance of the library system within East Providence, Fuller Creative Learning Center has joined us as a partner in offering this series, as well as in the creation of the above-mentioned community garden. We also continue to work closely with the Office of Community Development, with the Community Development Director, David Bachrach, serving as a member of our Steering Committee continuously since EPHEZ’s beginning in 2019 and co-facilitator of our Housing Workgroup. Finally, as we continue to address systemic barriers to health equity for residents, we are leaning into the relationship we have with the East Providence Senior Center to establish a mechanism for linking the Food Pantry and seniors that do not have regular transportation. The first iteration of this mechanism, where pantry bags from EBCAP will be packed and delivered to the Senior Center for distribution among members, will begin in July 2023.

Pre-School Development Grant:

Over the last year, we have continued to focus on providing resources, support, and education to families with children ages 0-5 and expectant parents, particularly those from traditionally underserved communities. As detailed in the Executive Summary above, our Family Navigators have spent the last year establishing themselves as a trusted resource within the community, through a regular presence in EP schools, programming initiatives such as dance classes for toddlers at Weaver Library, setting up kid-friendly activity tables at resource fairs and outreach events, and our popular Play-and-Learn programs. Their work and relationship with residents cannot be overstated.

In addition to the work with the school department, additional highlights include:

- Continued partnership with the Rhode Island Philharmonic and Orchestra Music School and EBCAP’s Parents as Teachers (PAT) program; for the third year in a row, “Family Music Time with the Phil,” a free, 33-week program that combines music education for infants, toddlers, and pre-k students with the evidence-based PAT curriculum for parents, was offered to families across the city. The program was finally

offered in person at the RI Philharmonic Orchestra & Music School in East Providence. Families received free books and musical instruments to continue their education at home, and were able to make a connection with both the EBCAP Family Visiting team and the EPHEZ Family Navigator. Families have left positive feedback about this program, and had regular attendance over the past eight months;

- For the second year in a row, we offered Play-and-Learn programs at Weaver Library and Martin Pre-K. This program uses evidence-based childhood development curriculums (The Basics and Growing Great Kids) to offer developmentally appropriate and effective tips for parents and caregivers, while engaging the children in socialization, free play, story times, and crafts. Each session, families went home with craft materials and a new book to add to their home libraries. These programs received positive feedback from participants, and will continue to be offered through Year 5, with support from EBCAP's Family Visiting program, the East Providence Library System, and the EPSD;
- EPHEZ Family Navigators also continued to host a seed starting activity table at various outreach events in East Providence. First, kids decorate a pot using markers and stickers, then they choose which seed they want to plant from a variety of fruits, vegetables, and flowers; and finally plant their own seeds in soil and watch it grow at home! This activity has been very well-received by parents and children alike, and along with other kid-friendly activities that were provided throughout the year, have led to EPHEZ being approached by organizations throughout East Providence to host family-activity tables at community events throughout the remainder of the calendar year.

Steering Committee and Supported Growth

Throughout the course of Year 4, EPHEZ began three new workgroups, based on needs identified by residents: Food Access, Early Childhood, and Environmental Justice. Our Steering Committee was engaged in this process, serving as the initial members of these groups and suggesting additional community connections to invite. We also hosted our first annual meeting in October 2022, allowing an opportunity for all EPHEZ Collaborative members to learn more about our work, governance structure, individual grants and budgets, and to meet the full EPHEZ team. Our Steering Committee also continued to be engaged in our decision-making process, receiving regular updates on our budgets; undergoing the annual review of our Governance structure; working with workgroup members to revise our annual workgroup meeting schedule and structure; and providing feedback on potential grant opportunities. As we head into Year 5, we look forward to growing our three newest workgroups, and to identifying cross-workgroup collaborations:

- **Early Childhood:** In January 2023, EPHEZ created an Early Childhood workgroup to address barriers for families raising young children in East Providence. This workgroup includes representatives from the EP school department, public libraries, Family Care Community Partnerships (FCCPs), Head Start, Green and Healthy Homes Initiative, and residents. Though still in its early stages, the workgroup has identified priority issues to address, such as: flu vaccination accessibility for children under the age of 2, car seat safety, and availability of child care and early childhood resources within the city;
- **Food Access:** Our Food Access workgroup also began in January 2023, and includes representation from the RI Food Policy Council, URI SNAP-Ed, the East Providence Boys and Girls Club, Bread of Life, Good Neighbors RI, and residents. Priority areas to address have included better distribution of resource information among residents, increasing nutrition education, and increasing access to fresh and affordable produce in the city;
- **Environmental Justice:** Our newest workgroup, our Environmental Justice workgroup began in DATE, and is supported by the RIDOH Environmental Justice grant. Members include the East Providence School Department, Open Farms Retreat, ProChange, the East Providence Library System, the East Providence Boys and Girls Club, and residents. With a heavy emphasis on education for members, this workgroup meets on a monthly basis, and members identified areas for professional development, including urban and community gardening. Recognizing

the amount of environmental justice work that is already being done by grassroots organizations, which are frequently led by BIPOC residents, this workgroup is also learning what supports are needed to help existing organizations succeed in their goals.

Regional Strategy to Address Health Equity Barriers

Recognizing a common theme in regional health disparities, EPHEZ partnered with the Bristol and Warren HEZs to ensure the efficient use of resources and sharing of information. Leaning on the support of EBCAP as the backbone organization for all three HEZs, we continued to partner over SFY23 to not only share support resources, but to also continue our development of a regional strategy to address overarching health equity barriers, including access to healthy, affordable food; services for families with young children; and addressing racial inequities.

Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

EPHEZ Collaborative members, including all EPHEZ staff, are deeply committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and to supporting anti-racist policies, both within the community and within EBCAP. All staff continue to be members of EBCAP's staff-led Taskforce for Justice and Equity (TFJE); EPHEZ staff, joined by their Bristol and Warren HEZ colleagues, attended bi-weekly trainings hosted by D & I Strategists (<https://dandistrategists.com>). The East Providence, Bristol, and Warren HEZ Directors are also members of the EBCAP DEI Implementation Team, and assisted with the facilitation of Psychological Safety trainings throughout the entirety of EBCAP over the course of the grant year.

Throughout 2022, the RIDOH Health Equity Institute and all HEZs throughout the State also participated in a year-long racial equity impact workshop facilitated by Equity and Results. This series focused on moving from antiracist belief to action by setting a baseline of foundational knowledge and applying it to an Antiracist Results-Based Accountability methodology to disrupt racial inequity. Each HEZ gathered a team of residents and community partners to develop both collective and HEZ-specific results and identified strategies for a racially equitable impact. EPHEZ committed to supporting adult education efforts, and based on resident feedback gathered by EBCAP's Adult Education department, began their support by purchasing culturally relevant artwork for Weaver House, the location for EBCAP's East Providence adult and youth education programming, in an effort to create a welcoming and respectful space for all learners.

IV. Success Stories/Narrative

Play & Learn Takeaways:

Fall 2022:

“So blessed to have access and committed outreach from Naomi. Having a program is almost meaningless if you don't commit to consistent outreach, and she has done a great job!”

“We enjoyed the program. It is nice to be able to work on socialization in a safe environment.”

Winter 2023:

“I like the program very much! The facilitators are great!”

“Just a lovely program, thanks.”

“This was so fun and loved getting new books to add into our rotation.”

Spring 2023:

“I enjoy this class, some weeks it’s the only time I get out and get to hang out with other moms.”

“I love learning about everything EBCAP offers. We love story time and everything this program has to offer. Everyone is so nice and caring.”

Family Music Time Takeaways:

“This class has given my son the opportunity to explore music. We have learned new parenting techniques, been introduced to new words/instruments and enjoyed making new connections with peers. We have learned the importance of structured play. When we 1st began attending our son struggled to sit still and concentrate but now he can sit, focus and follow instructions. This group is something we both look forward to attending weekly. The books given have also opened our eyes to new authors and illustrators. My son was introduced to one of his favorite books through this group.”

“This program is invaluable! Chaia gives us tips & tricks that I implement at home. Any free program for this age helps all families. I feel lucky that I get to be a part of this. Getting community together this way is needed these days and this program is perfect.”

“We have enjoyed attending and participating in the EBCAP music program. My 3yo son speaks Spanish at home and he enjoys the classes and books and sings the songs at home, too. Chaia is patient and easygoing with the kids. We appreciate that it’s long because we get to see the same faces regularly. Most importantly we appreciate all the instruments we have been able to play.”

Community Partners:

“The (Application Assistance) event was a great success and thank you for your participation and support! You will be pleased when you read the great comments!”

“Thanks so much for putting me in touch with Alyssa. We appreciate the work you're doing so much and are ecstatic for the hydroponic gardens!”

“Thank you for your email and the EOY report. Wow! EPHEZ has covered a lot of ground in three short years. This report is a good reminder of the work that is/was being done during the pandemic.”

Rhode to Equity:

Response from participants when asked how the monthly produce has impacted their eating habits:

- “Positively improved grocery shopping habits for veggies/recipes, change in eating habits and being able to eat more regularly because of the access to produce”
- “Lost weight, eating less sodium, feel more confident in health overall and ability to monitor”
- “Yes, now when I can afford it, I buy mostly veggies, fruits and mostly chicken as my main source of meat”
- “It allows me to increase my intake of fresh fruit, veggies, and nuts. Things are normally expensive at the grocery store. Have even been able to try veggies I have never had before”

From our Rhode to Equity team members:

“You should know that this team has been mission-driven and committed to bettering the East Providence community from the start, and that workers from different organizations and PLEs became one unit to work towards our goals.”

V. EPHEZ Dashboard/Action Plan

See attached.

VI. Evaluation Plan

Collaborative Evaluation Planning: 2022 -2023

Over the 2022-23 program year, EBCAP (backbone agency) and the three HEZ sites it supports – Bristol, East Providence and Warren - identified data collection and evaluation as an opportunity for collaboration and joint learning. There are several reasons this group of HEZ sites and backbone agency have taken a collaborative approach, including:

- Working together maximizes available financial resources and creates economies of scale.
- These three HEZ sites, and EBCAP, share overlapping populations and agency partners. While each HEZ represents a distinct community, they work with many of the same community partners on similar issues. This is especially true with Bristol and Warren, who share pre-K students and the same K-12 regional public-school district.
- Through the shared backbone agency, significant opportunities exist to identify, access, and share relevant data sources to inform community assessment, program development and evaluation.

With these considerations in mind, an RFP process for an evaluation consultant was completed in Fall 2022. Jill Glickman was selected for the contract and started work in January 2023. Ms. Glickman meets regularly with each HEZ Director, attends Steering Committee and Work Group meetings as needed, and leads a monthly joint evaluation meeting with three HEZ Directors, Rita Capotosto, EBCAP’s Vice President for Family Development, and members of EBCAP’s internal quality team.

Over the last six months, significant progress has been made in four areas:

- Evaluation Framework and Processes
- Data Collection: Systems and Alignment
- Community Needs Assessment
- Work Group Development

Progress in each area is noted below and includes specific examples of how our collaborative approach across the three HEZ sites and with EBCAP has been successful thus far.

Evaluation Framework and Processes

The evaluation consultant is working with each HEZ to develop an evaluation framework and data collection plan to include:

- Logic model, theory of change, or other framework to provide a foundation for 2023-24 and beyond.
- Outputs, outcomes, and data collection guide for individual programs.
- Jointly developed metrics to better understand the effectiveness of the HEZ model and shared backbone agency
- Inclusion of an ongoing stakeholder feedback loop to disseminate evaluation findings and inform future data collection, learning, and evaluation plans
- Alignment with state-level RI Health Equity Measures and evaluation plan

An overarching goal of this effort is to provide each HEZ with an evaluation framework that is flexible enough to adapt to changing needs and opportunities but also provides the guidance and direction needed to demonstrate progress toward short and long-term outcomes.

We began the development of this framework this Spring with the East Providence HEZ. A draft logic model, set of evaluation questions and aligned 3-year data collection plan are being shared with key stakeholders, including the Steering Committee, for input and revisions. Once the process and templates have been vetted and refined by the East Providence team, the processes and materials will be used to launch a similar effort with the Bristol and Warren HEZ sites to strengthen and guide their program planning, data collection and evaluation.

Data Collection: Systems and Alignment

The evaluation consultant supported all three HEZ directors to strengthen and align data collection with program goals, evaluation plans and stated outcomes, short and long-term. This is both an individual project with each HEZ and part of the collaborative effort across three sites with EBCAP. Main activities to date include:

- Outreach to community and state partners to collect relevant data by zip code wherever possible. This has been central to the updated community needs assessment underway in Bristol *and* will serve as baseline data as we work to identify and track short, medium and long-term outcome measures for all three HEZ sites.
- Internal work with each HEZ to standardize data collection for HEZ-sponsored or supported activities and programs.
- A new project with EBCAP's internal quality team to explore how to systematize data collection to inform community needs assessments and build capacity to demonstrate longer-term health outcomes. With the depth and breadth of EBCAP's services in all three HEZ communities and the participation of their staff as part of our joint evaluation team, this effort represents significant untapped potential for future evaluation efforts.
- Review collected data and summarize results for internal review and external reporting.

Community Needs Assessment

While each HEZ engages in ongoing community assessment activities, Bristol launched a targeted community assessment “refresh” process over the last six months to ensure that the primary focus areas they identified in 2020 reflect the community's current needs. The three main components of the Assessment effort are:

1. Develop a targeted community survey to reach demographic groups that may have been under-represented in their 2020 survey, administered during the height of the pandemic. The 2023 Survey instrument is in the final review process and will be administered in the Summer /Fall.
2. Collect relevant data from existing sources. The Evaluation consultant initiated collection of relevant data from existing sources - local, state and national - with a strong emphasis on zip code level data wherever possible.
3. Share findings with Key Stakeholders. In May, initial data findings on key issues of concern, such as food access/insecurity, personal health and wellness, demographic shifts, and other social determinants of health that may be impacting Bristol residents, were shared with the Bristol Steering Committee for review and discussion. This session was the first of several planned as more data and survey results are available. Similarly, data pertinent to specific Work Groups will be shared and discussed in their meetings to inform future program plans and overall goals.

Bristol’s targeted assessment process has directly benefitted both Warren and East Providence. Examples include:

- The work completed by the consultant to update survey language questions for Bristol to reflect best practices, especially around race/ethnicity, gender and sexuality, can be adapted and used by the other two HEZ sites in their future assessment efforts.
- Most of the data collected from existing sources for Bristol was also collected for Warren and East Providence at the same time to inform their ongoing community assessment, program development and evaluation.

Work Group Development

The evaluation consultant has been available to Work Group champions and consultants to provide zip code, county and state-level data as needed and to support data-focused learning opportunities at Work Group meetings. These efforts have helped to build the capacity of Work Group members to utilize data to support local needs assessment and to inform the development of targeted activities and programs.

Still in its first few years of operation, Warren has especially benefited from this approach as it stood up two new Work Groups in the last six months: Youth and Food Access/Insecurity. Warren’s Youth-focused Work Group, led by Amy Griffin, took a significant dive into relevant data to inform their initial workplan. Additionally, the Warren and Bristol Food-related Work Groups convened a joint meeting in June to examine recent data collected by the evaluation consultant.

Plans for 2023 – 24

We anticipate that we will be able to maintain momentum on the work outlined above in the new program year. Key activities will include:

- o Logic models and evaluation framework completed for East Providence and developed in partnership with Bristol and Warren stakeholders.

- Administration and analysis of the 2023 Bristol Community Needs Assessment Survey.
- More standardized data collection across HEZ-sponsored and supported activities, especially demographic data. This effort may also include the addition of 1-2 questions focused on understanding the increasing concern noted in the literature around loneliness and social isolation.
- Planning for a targeted qualitative evaluation effort across all three HEZ sites. Planning will include identification of core evaluation question shared by the three sites as well as methodology that will yield results to inform their work. Under consideration: case studies or “seven stories” approach, key information interviews, or focus groups across the three communities.
- Continued work with the EBCAP quality team to mine data capacity and opportunities for collaboration on data collection and analysis.
- Continued focus on data collection from relevant, existing sources to inform the work of each HEZ and build community capacity to discuss and utilize data alongside lived experience and subject matter expertise.

Presentation to EPHEZ Steering Committee, June 2023:

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1ieDX4lyRhAhA_3IEZo41G675G4ypaEJ6/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=108255250050121679257&rtpof=true&sd=true

VII. Partner Summary

Collaborative membership list attached.

VII. Community Needs Assessment Summary

<p>Information Source * <i>Where/how are you getting the information (data)</i></p>	<p>Stakeholders engaged <i>Who was/is the target population(s) and how were/are they identified and reached?</i></p>	<p>How will you/did you engage the different stakeholders? <i>How does assessment support identification of needs coming from the community?</i></p>	<p>Findings/Results of the community assessment (if completed) <i>What issues or priorities were identified in the community, and how will they be shared with the community and prioritized?</i></p>	<p>Success and challenges of this community needs assessment activity <i>What would you do again and what would you have done differently?</i></p>
<p>Year 1 EP HEZ Needs Assessment (included review of existing research and census data as well as original research) Year 3 EPHEZ Community Needs Assessment</p>	<p>Steering Committee, HEZ Staff, East Providence residents, EBCAP employees who serve East Providence residents</p>	<p>Steering Committee Meetings, Work Group Meetings, Staff Meetings, surveys, social media, community meeting, key stakeholder interviews</p>	<p>We identified that East Providence has many strengths, including a strong existing sense of community, strong emergency services, and proximity to Providence and other municipalities within the East Bay area. Areas of need across both assessments included behavioral health services; housing; youth (teen) services; services for families with young children; food access; transportation; health literacy and education; and in-home supports for seniors.</p>	<p>Will continue to provide interactive Community Needs Assessments; residents appreciated the opportunity to connect with resources while providing feedback</p>

<p>HEZ Social Media Report - Hoot Suite</p>	<p>Steering Committee, HEZ Staff, community members</p>	<p>Steering Committee Meetings, Work Group Meetings, Staff Meetings, Facebook including Facebook Live events, Instagram</p>	<p>We track community outreach efforts and community engagement and interest</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Rhode to Equity Participant Tracking and Internal Collaboration Tracking</p>	<p>Steering Committee, HEZ Staff</p>	<p>Steering Committee Meetings, Work Group Meetings, Staff Meetings</p>	<p>Tracked Retention of Participants: We have had the same core 17 community members participate throughout the year, and added 12 additional participants between December 2021-June 2022. Core 29 individuals participated from June-December 2022. Produce to People ended in December 2022. Tracked Internal Collaboration of the Agency: The Food Pantry, HEZ, Health Center, and Community Health Team, collaborated to track responsiveness of Staff and Programming: The needs and suggestions of the program participants were listened to and incorporated. Has led to monthly Produce Week at the EBCAP Food Pantry in East Providence, increased variety of healthy offerings, and increased collaboration among local food pantries</p>	<p>Using population health data for East Providence to direct what needs are addressed</p>

<p>Parents as Teachers Survey - Pre/Post and Attendance</p>	<p>Families with children ages 0-4. Steering Committee, HEZ Staff including Family Navigator, EBCAP family visiting and Head Start staff, RI Philharmonic & Music School</p>	<p>Steering Committee Meetings, Work Group Meetings, Staff Meetings</p>	<p>We track satisfaction, attendance, and demographic information.</p>	<p>Transitioned to all in-person programming, which was highly successful and encouraged relationships between participants. Also transitioned to a 33 week program; feedback on running one longer program rather than two shorter programs has been positive.</p>
<p>Play-and-Learns (Evidence Based Education Provided: Growing Great Kids, Parents as Teachers, The Basics)</p>	<p>Steering Committee, HEZ Staff</p>	<p>Steering Committee Meetings, Work Group Meetings, Staff Meetings</p>	<p>We track satisfaction, attendance, basic demographics</p>	<p>-All in-person classes; families appreciated the opportunity to meet with other residents -Introduced new education mechanisms each cycle to gather data; families enjoyed having specific areas of focus each week</p>
<p>Resident Engagement Advisory Workgroup</p>	<p>Steering Committee, HEZ Staff, EP Residents, EBCAP employees serving EP community</p>	<p>Steering Committee Meetings, Work Group Meetings, Staff Meetings</p>	<p>Provide a space for residents to provide continuous feedback on successes, barriers, and concerns</p>	<p>-Able to build community trust by continuously providing a space to engage, and at a time when residents were able to attend -Difficult to encourage participation virtually, not a space for 1:1 conversations</p>

IX. Looking Forward to the Coming Year: EPHEZ Needs and Challenges

The East Providence, Bristol, and Warren Health Equity Zones remain fortunate to share the backbone agency of East Bay Community Action Program, the support of which cannot be overstated. In addition to the regional strategies to address health disparities detailed earlier in this report, the access to social, medical, and behavioral health staff and services has been invaluable. New staff are able to immediately connect with subject matter experts across different departments, and programming opportunities are expanded due to the wealth of knowledge and partners at our fingertips. Our Health Disparities programming has been strengthened by our connection with the EBCAP Health Department, who joined us in monthly phone calls with RIDOH and the East Providence Emergency Management Agency to address COVID-19 vaccination, testing, and positivity rates for high-density communities. Our Rhode to Equity team has been supported by both the EBCAP Community Health Team and Food Pantry, who have helped to create needs assessments, supported the Produce to People program, and connected us with residents. Our Pre-School Development Grant continues to build relationships with the EBCAP Home Visiting Team and Head Start/Early Head Start departments, who supported play-and-learn groups, outreach activities, and staff on-boarding.

EBCAP also continues to provide administrative support to the East Providence, Bristol, and Warren HEZs, including in the areas of human resources, finance, and communications. It should be noted that EBCAP bears the financial and administrative burden for this support; an ongoing challenge faced by backbone organizations is the inability to charge HEZ funding the federally approved indirect cost rate to support administrative functions. As we head into Year 5 of EPHEZ, and increase our focus on creating sustainable funding streams, it should be noted that these funding streams need to include funding support for backbone organizations. HEZs are complex initiatives, with complex financial and administrative requirements; allowable expenses should reflect the time and dedication required of backbone organizations to support these requirements.

An additional barrier faced this year has been the lack of dedicated office space for EPHEZ team members. Our backbone organization supports a wide array of services in the area, including clinical services, and space at our East Providence locations is limited. As we head into Year 5, RIDOH support in securing funding for office space and associated fees is needed.

It should also be noted that the majority of HEZ funding is through short-term grants; this funding instability leads to barriers in recruiting staff, long-term planning, and financial projections. Additional resources for the administrative functions necessary to secure long-term grants, including funding to support grant-writing, dedicated evaluation funding, and the above-mentioned office space, would be highly beneficial. As the HEZ Initiative continues its progress towards our long-term goal of sustained systems change, it is important that we are able to utilize funding that supports these goals, rather than primarily focusing on funding that supports programming and engagement. EPHEZ looks forward to supporting the identification of these funding sources, diversifying and increasing our funding streams, and to witnessing the long-term positive impact that this goal will have on our residents.

X. Summary

The East Providence Health Equity Zone, like all Cohort 2 HEZs, spent our first three years in an interesting state of development, as many traditional infrastructure and coalition-building exercises were halted in favor of supporting our community through the COVID-19 pandemic. After devoting Year 3 to strengthening the foundations and relationships that began in 2019, Year 4 began in July 2022 with a heavy focus on growing our relationships, programming, and funding. From professional development opportunities for EPHEZ staff and Collaborative members, to health education for residents, to programming aimed at building community resilience and addressing social isolation, our programming efforts have all had

the underlying goal of laying the foundation to begin changing the systems that create health inequities among our residents. This foundation begins with the EPHEZ Steering Committee members, who continue to show incredible dedication to both EPHEZ and the residents of East Providence. They continue to share resources and ideas, to brainstorm ways to address root causes of inequity and the day-to-day struggles of residents, to participate in and host weeknight and weekend events, and to set the tone for how the EPHEZ Collaborative interacts with and supports residents. This same dedication continues to be mirrored by EPHEZ staff, who tirelessly work to improve health outcomes and remove barriers for all East Providence residents. They continue to serve as community resources in their own right, as they connect residents to resources, help them to fill out applications, distribute masks, sanitizer, and test kits, and remain approachable, friendly, and respectful to all. As we rebuild from the COVID-19 pandemic, the entire EPHEZ Collaborative continues to embody the spirit of collaboration and resiliency in support of East Providence residents.